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## Editorial

### THE TWO-YEAR LATIN COURSE

In the *School Review* for October Mr. H. F. Scott calls attention to the fact that a two-year Latin course is the normal thing for the majority of Latin pupils in the high schools of the Middle West. It is true that four years of Latin are offered by all good schools; but, because most of the state universities accept two years of Latin for entrance credit, a large proportion of the Latin students plan from the beginning to take only two years in the subject. This offers a convenient excuse for dropping the subject to the half-hearted and discouraged of those who might have gone farther. Consequently the teachers in many schools must face the fact squarely that whatever the great majority of their pupils are to get from Latin they must get from a two-year course. There seems to have been little discussion of the results of this fact.

Mr. Scott is clearly right in urging that we cease to think of the preparatory course as a four-year whole and to plan the first two years as if they were merely a part of that whole. We can no longer, if ever we could, regard those who drop their Latin at the end of two years as mere "quitters," who have no right to be considered in shaping the course. We must plan a two-year course with full appreciation of the fact that it is the whole Latin course for most pupils. We must choose from the ideals and aims of Latin study those which are capable of realization in a two-year course, and must see to it that in the second year those sides of the study are emphasized which will be of permanent value to the pupil, not merely those which will best enable him to go on with his Latin.

But it does not seem certain that such a thoughtful consideration of the two-year course will result in so wide a divergence from the

best present practice as Mr. Scott thinks. While disagreeing as to means and method, we most heartily agree with his fundamental thesis, that the chief benefit to the pupil should be in his better understanding and use of English, and that increased attention should be given to this side of Latin teaching. It is disgraceful that so many of us hold this view in theory and fail to develop it in practice. The two-year course may possibly be of help here; for the teacher who thinks only of the four-year course may justify his failure to teach English in the second year on the ground that he has more than he can do in teaching Latin enough to prepare for the third year, while the teacher who realizes that the second year is his last chance to help the pupil is under no such restriction. But we believe that the same care in teaching English should be given to the four-year pupil as to the two-year, and we urge an improvement in this respect quite without reference to the special needs of two-year pupils.

On the other hand, Mr. Scott thinks that two-year pupils should abandon sight-reading, extended drill in indirect discourse, and all but very simple composition. Again we quite cheerfully agree with him; but we would have those things dropped from the second year of a four-year course as well. Very little sight-reading can be done in the second year, at most, except by the sacrifice of more important things; and sight-reading can hardly be considered the best preparation for third-year work, or even for a sight test. Since there is almost no indirect discourse in Cicero and Vergil, an extended drill in this construction is no preparation for reading those authors; the time might better be spent on more important things. Most second-year composition books are not simple enough.

On the whole, therefore, we see no sufficient reason for Mr. Scott's further suggestion that separate classes be formed for those who are known to be planning to study Latin only two years. On the contrary it seems likely that the interests of all pupils will be best served by planning the second-year work of all as if that year were to be their last, and by striving to give to all alike the utmost of permanent value that can be given in that year. We believe that a determination to do this will be the best result of a consideration of the two-year course.